

IDIOTS ARE **INVINCIBLE**

**... and they always
manage to ruin our day.
The fool-proof “Ro”
method to handle them,
solve problems, and
enjoy the process!**



**Dr Angelo
Rodafinos**

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Dr ANGELOS RODAFINOS

Author of Prince to Frog and ... Vice Versa!

[NOTE: This is the bite-sized version (for those who are in a hurry) of Dr Ro's brilliant book with the same title.]

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British spelling of most common words has been used.

Kind Words

A scientifically-based integrative approach to dealing with stress, written in the most accessible way! The best of both worlds. –Dr G. Sideridis, Harvard Medical School

Your books have been monumental readings to me. –G. Kyriakides, Training Director, Human Asset Ltd.

You made me laugh aloud several times. I keep thinking about the cartoons and smile inside me. Congratulations on your wonderful book. You have done an amazing job. –T. Maria, Lawyer

A book for a lifetime! I have thought of a few dozens of friends that absolutely need to read it. –C. Vovori

A friend recommended that I should follow the ‘Ro’ therapy. Thank you for your contribution in making our life more beautiful. –V. Anthoulakis, Army Officer

This is the first time that a book motivates me to contact the author. It is really a great piece of work. Well organized combines theory and practice with a lot of humour. It can serve as a guide. –S. Athina, Lecturer, Aristotle University

I really enjoy reading your books! They improve my mood. They were exactly what I needed and have helped me in my personal and professional development. Keep writing in the same spirit. –T. Elissavet

Incredible writing style, with so much humour, that someone may indeed consider changing his or her habits. Check it out. I

do not know the author; I was impressed and just wished to
express it. –Andria's blog

If you could cast a spell on Angelos Rodafinos, what would it
do? ... Make him write a third book. –P. Megremis

To the members of the Idiots Club!

The President,

Dr Ro

Contents

THE END	10
PART I: A LITTLE THEORY	18
1. STRESS? WHAT IS THAT?	19
2. COPING WITH STRESS	23
3. PRACTICAL P'RO'BLEM SOLVING	28
4. APPLYING THE "RO" METHOD	33
PART II: A DAY WITH DON STRESSOTE	42
5. MORNING WORK-OUT	44
6. ANGRY DRILLS	48
7. WORK DRILLS	52
8. ON THE WAY HOME	55
9. CONTINUOUS SELF-DEVELOPMENT	58
10. THE BEGINNING (EPILOGUE)	62

Preface

Those who read the title of my book *Idiots are Invincible*, nod condescendingly in agreement: “Indeed, the author is right, they really are invincible,” thinking most probably of people other than themselves. I do not know who they are thinking of, but no one, until now, has happened to come across my book and agree: “Indeed, the author is right, we are invincible.” I am beginning to think that perhaps idiots are mythical creatures, as I have yet to meet one!

The truth is that when I started writing the book, I also had “the others” in mind: the boss, the professor, the referee, the inept driver, the rude employee, the clumsy server, the delayed colleague, the annoying salesperson, the mother-in-law and generally anyone who does not behave “properly,” i.e., “the way we would like them to behave!” [Obviously, I do not refer to mental retardation but to people who simply have a different outlook and behaviour than we do].

At some point, however, I realised that as a manager, professor, driver, co-worker, I am often the idiot in other people’s lives. In their opinion, I do not behave *properly*, i.e., “as *they* would want me to” all the time, either. Later, I also realised that, often, I was the “idiot” for myself! Irrational thoughts and beliefs such as: “everyone must love me,” “my house must always be clean,” “I must be a good husband, lover, manager, father, son, friend ...” create problems and imbalances for us and those around us.

If some books can change your life, I am confident that the present one will help you to change, if not the conditions in your life, at least the way you think and how you see your life—for the better.

At least this is what several hundreds of the thousands of readers of *Idiots are Invincible* who have contacted me in the past few years have claimed.

If what you have tried so far has not produced the desired results, and if your approach to life is not working out the way you would like, it may be time to try something new—absorb the ideas described in the following pages and test the “Ro” method for yourself. You have absolutely nothing to lose but a little time.

If my prediction is right and the claim many readers have made is valid, the immediate benefits of reading this book are likely to include the following:

- More effective problem solving
- Better decisions and choices
- Improved interpersonal relationships
- Less tension, anxiety, worry and guilt
- A stronger immune system
- A feeling of control
- Increased self-esteem
- A healthier body
- A more pleasant and satisfying life

You can also join the Facebook group [Idiots' Club](#) a.k.a. Boneheads' Academy Blog, where you can share your stories and your ideas for dealing with idiots and adverse situations. Do not forget that we are often the 'idiots' for others (and that may be at this moment they are writing about us) ... and even for ourselves.

Enough with the promotion.

Enjoy!

Dr Ro

The end



I think the most unfair thing about life is the way it ends. I mean, life is tough. It takes up a lot of your time. What do you get at the end of it? A death! What is that, a bonus? I think the life cycle is all backwards. You should die first; get it out of the way. Then you live in an old age home. You get kicked out when you're too young, you get a gold watch, you go to work. You work for forty years until you're young enough to enjoy your retirement! You go to college, you do drugs, alcohol, you party, you have sex, you get ready for high school. You go to grade school, you become a kid, you play, you have no responsibilities, you become a little baby, you go back into the womb, you spend your last nine months floating ... You finish off as a gleam in somebody's eye. –Sean Morey, Reverse cycle life

WHAT A NICE way to start; from the end. Kind of unusual for a book. But this *is* an unusual book, for unusual people. I am confident that its content will mark the *end* of a period in your life and the beginning of another, becoming an important aid in

reducing negative thoughts and emotions, and living healthier and happier. Now, off we go!

Story: Some escape!

On a cold and rainy winter's afternoon at an airport, a 12-year-old boy observed several passengers at an airport, waiting for an update on their flight, which was delayed. They looked worn out and glum.

"How come those people look so tired?" he asked his father.

"Perhaps because adult life is tough," replied the father.

"You mean I will also become like that when I grow up?" the twelve-year-old asked.

Taking a minute to think, his father responded:

"Some people manage to escape."



Is this how I will be when I grow up? I think I will pass!

Who manages to “escape?” What kind of coping strategies do people implement when faced with life’s challenges? Why is it that some individuals never seem to be able to cope while some others appear to encounter less adversity in their lives?

These are the questions that intrigued several distinguished researchers, including Paul Stoltz, the University of Pennsylvania professor who shared the previous story, and, of course, myself!

To begin to answer these questions, though, the first thing is really to understand, well, how you are doing.

How are *you* doing?

When asked this question, participants at my lectures and workshops are unenthusiastic. Many of them sound very frustrated. A usual response is, “Blah; I am always on the run; no time, too much stress!” As the conversation starts rolling, questions arise.

“What is stress?”

“Is it normal?”

“Can stress be useful?”

“What are the health consequences of excessive stress?”

“I don’t have stress. Is this dangerous?”

To find answers to all these questions, you will have to read the following chapters. To get us started, though, I will answer just a couple, selectively, right here.

The first thing to know about stress is that many people believe that feeling stressed day and night is the natural state of life. This is not true. Excessive stress may be common but is not healthy. Negative emotions produce hormones that affect our body and, in the long term, our health and wellbeing. Too little stress, on the other hand, may also be harmful!

When I ask, “Who in this group thinks has the most problems to deal with?” most individuals put their hands up—they think it is them.

Here are some more brief answers/teasers to frequently asked questions.

Q.: “Are there some “lucky individuals” who were born with superior resistance to stress? Is it possible to be entirely “insensitive?” What can one do to reduce (or increase) stress?”

A.: “Yes. No. A lot.”

Q.: “If I read this book, will I be able to get rid of stress for good?”

A.: Okay, I will answer this one as well, for the sake of marketing the book. I guess the answer is like the one for the question “If I

take a bath, will I smell nice forever?” or “If I eat a lot, will I feel hungry again?” The reduction, or rather, the management of stress needs to be a continuous, life-long process.

Q.: “What’s in it for me if I reduce stress?”

A.: The benefits of stress management include, among other things, better interpersonal relationships, a more efficient immune system and fewer diseases, a pleasant and more satisfying life, and making a significant step towards the realisation of your potential.

Isn’t it strange? When we have a headache or a stomach ache we share our problem with everyone around, visit the doctor, follow the prescription, try “alternative or complementary medicine,”¹ we even follow the advice of quacks.

On the other hand, when we suffer from excessive stress or are dissatisfied with our work, our relationships, or our lives, all we do is complain to those people who are unable to help us to resolve our issues.

At the same time, there is so much talk about stress daily without anyone ever saying enough. I sincerely hope that the content of this book will become a significant aid for the rest of your life.

In this relatively simplified manual, I have tried to summarise a series of theories and techniques alongside several everyday serious and funny applications. I have, as much as possible, avoided numerous references and academic citations to scientific studies. My goal is that everyone should understand the material. However, I assure you that (most of) what you are about to read is cross-referenced, with evidence and results from

¹ That is, therapies whose effectiveness has not been proven experimentally, under well-planned and controlled conditions. Otherwise, we would have classified them as medicine!

legitimate scientific research; apart, perhaps, from the folk wisdom that stems from the short tales cited. These proffer a common knowledge that has been available through the ages.

Q.: “Do you practice what you preach?”

A.: I was a champion at 15, a champion-worrier. By that age, I had already received extensive training. My parents were champions too! The Greeks have an outstanding National Worry team. Unfortunately, worrying never became an Olympic event.

“Do this, don’t do that, you haven’t eaten enough, wear this, watch out, you’ll hurt yourself, be careful, you’ll catch a cold ...”

That lasted for years. I went through the first 24 years of my life with no idea about the psychological theories and applications described in the following chapters. I certainly wish I had been exposed to them earlier! My life has improved a lot since I read and mastered the related materials. Yet, when I am under pressure, I often neglect to apply the theory. But it certainly has made a significant difference in the way I perceive the world and how I deal with challenges.

–Spiderman, are you going out? –Yes, Mom. –Put your robe on; you will catch a cold.

How our mind ... runs

Al Oerter was an American athlete. He won four consecutive Olympic gold medals in the discus throw and was in top physical condition for at least 16 years. According to Dr Dennis Waitley, when he was in his forties, Al made the following statement:

“By the time I realised that success is 90 per cent the result for how our mind runs and 10 per cent the result of how we run, I already had the body of a senior citizen! Oh, if only I could be young again; if I could have had this knowledge earlier in my life.”

We need to train our mind much like we practise and train our body. Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, the single reading of

a book or a week of practice may not suffice to learn to apply all the good ideas that you will read about. They must become habits and part of your way of life. You also need to hang out with the right people, those who will help you stay on the straight and narrow when things get tough. Because, while I cannot warranty that things will always run smooth, I can warranty that there will be setbacks.

Some of you may well wonder:

“Is that true? Can we learn psychological skills to feel better when things are not the way we would like them to be?”

I am confident that you will learn several valuable techniques *and* enjoy this reading. Go ahead, turn the pages, and flick through the book for a brief preview. No, do not read the end yet! For some reason, a lot of readers (including me) do that. See if you can exercise self-control and resist the impulse.

The way forward

This abridged version of the full book includes two parts.

Part I: A little theory

In the first part I define stress, refer to the common sources of stress (which include “the idiots” in our life), and discuss whether personality traits are related to the way individuals perceive and experience stress. Then, I make the distinction between healthy and unhealthy responses to stress and present the basic principles of stress management.

This section introduces the “Ro”² method, a simple, yet sophisticated problem-solving formula that can help you deal

² Any similarities with the renown “R-20” problem-solving method (Russian twenty-year-old, mail-order bride), is purely coincidental.

with annoying people, situations, and your own thoughts. It is a dependable and fool-proof method that you can apply to any type of problem you are facing today or may face in the future.

Part II: A day in the life of Don Stressote

Part two of the book recounts a day in the life of Don Stressote—a modern-day Don Quixote.

The hero, who has just finished reading the theoretical section and is, therefore, a proud graduate of the Ro method, attempts to apply what he has learnt, from the moment he wakes up to the moment he returns home exhausted.

Armed with courage and stoicism, Don confronts the monsters and the dragons (the idiots³) of the 21st century: his partner who got to the toilet first and is now studying Rodafinos' book insensitive to the needs of others, the chubby guy in the tiny European lift who squeezes him into the corner, the traffic, his stupid boss, the disgruntled and impervious client, as well as the most problematic person of all—himself and his irrational expectations!

Don differs from other mere mortals, thanks to his humour, his determination and commitment, his carefully designed plan of action on how to deal with minor annoyances and major upsets. When he wakes up every morning, Don reminds himself:

“I won't let any idiot ruin my day, because this is MY day!”

³ The word idiot used to have a completely different meaning. “Idiotis” in ancient Athens was someone who was self-centred and lacked concern for public affairs. In the present book, the term does not refer to the mentally retarded, but rather to those who are acting in a self-defeating or counterproductive way, are incapable of reasoning that their actions may affect or harm others, or those who simply do not care about others.



This is MY day!

Don's ability to maintain the appropriate distance from every problem is of the utmost importance. He can put things into perspective, offering every event the necessary attention and nothing more.

All this takes place in the second part of the book. By that time, readers of the full version will understand a) why they have read several hundred pages of this book, b) who they really are, and c) what they are doing on this planet. They will also find the answers to several other philosophical and ... metaphysical questions.

Let us begin!

PART I: A LITTLE THEORY

I want to move to theory. Everything works in theory. –John Cash

ARE YOU stressed? If yes, join the club.

Stress can be useful or detrimental. Many studies have shown, however, that excessive stress is harmful to just about anyone. The extent of the adverse effects of stress depends on several factors, such as genes, general physical condition, diet and lifestyle, etc. Do not despair, though, because there are several cognitive and behavioural stress management techniques and methods to help you deal with stress and reduce its undesirable effects.

In this Part, we will answer the following questions:

What is stress?

What or who creates stress?

Is stress generated from the outside or the inside?

If you feel pressure and stress, what senses allow you to experience these feelings? Can you see stress? Hear it? Catch it and kick it away? Smell it? Taste it and season it?

Are some people born “stressed?”

Is stress “necessary?”

1. Stress? What is that?

Stress is when you wake up screaming and you realise ... you haven't fallen asleep yet. –Anonymous

LET US start with a short test.

Rate your current mood, using a Likert scale from 1 = excellent to 5 = lousy.



If you scored 1 or 2 ... feel free to go and read another book. The rest of you must stay and study the material carefully.

Ready? Here we go.

Ask yourself, “Why am I not feeling good/great? What is missing? What would help me feel better - now and eventually?”

What is more important, asked the late Wayne Dyer:

- how much money we have?
- how much knowledge we have? or
- how we feel?

Most people agree that feeling good (c) is more important than either money or knowledge outright. If so, where are the classes at school that teach us how to communicate, deal with conflict, build relationships, regulate our emotions, manage stress?

Although most people complain about their stress, they have not taken a minute to find out what it is or spent some time to learn how to deal with it. Let us do that now.

Please take a minute to write down your answer to the question:

What is stress?

.....

When you are ready, compare your definition with the one below.

Stress is the response of the body to any event that threatens (or is perceived to threaten) our well-being, and exceeds our ability to cope with it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Any event, pleasant or unpleasant, that requires adjustment may cause a range of physiological and psychological responses. Hence, stress is unavoidable, normal, and even necessary. Excessive stress is the problem.



Stress and ... excessive stress

Now, list 3-4 common sources of stress in your life.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Common responses include

- relationships with others
- demands and time pressure
- work and finances
- traffic congestion
- health concerns, etc.

Yet a large part of the stress we experience exists only “in the eyes of the beholder.” This premise is supported by the fact that humans can trigger the stress or fight or flight response simply by thought, i.e., without a real, objective, external threat.

Nightmares are a helpful example: an imaginary stimulus, can cause psychological and physical responses. Excessive, frequent, and long-lasting stress has been associated with a variety of ailments.

Personality

According to Aaron Beck, anxious individuals often have unrealistic fears, tend to overrate the possibility of something bad happening to them, focus on potential negative scenarios, and worry about future events. They also overestimate the significance of an event, underestimate their ability to deal with events, and underrate or misuse social support.

Are these types of thought patterns “nurtured” and acquired or are they the result of biologically determined personality traits that predispose people to think and act in a certain way?

The answer is both.

Certain individuals are genetically privileged and can endure more stress. The personality traits believed to buffer stress include explanatory style, self-efficacy, psychological hardiness, locus of control, sensation seeking, autonomic nervous system responses, and Type-A behaviour.

The next question then is, "What are the effects of stress? What can happen to me?"

The effects of stress are both psychological and physical. The short answer is that excessive, frequent, and long-lasting stress has been associated with a variety of ailments, behavioural and psychological problems.

"Ok, but can we change?" you might ask.

*You can't stop the birds of worry from flying over your head
– but you can keep them from building their nest in your
hair. – Martin Luther King*

The good news is that, with some training, people can change their thought patterns, build better coping skills, and change their responses and the effects of stress. This is our subject for tomorrow.

As we will see, although we cannot (and should not) get rid of all negative emotions, we can reduce a) the *frequency*, b) the *intensity*, and c) the *duration* of such emotions. Make sure you memorize these three variables.

I also recommended you watch: [How to make stress your friend](#) (TED Talk, 14 mins).

Exercise

We all know people who rarely get stressed and others who get stressed by everything or are constantly stressed. Which category do you belong in? Can you think of certain periods or situations during which you surprised yourself with your responses?

2. Coping with stress

There must be quite a few things that a hot bath won't cure, but I don't know many of them –Sylvia Plath

WE AGREED that how we feel is quite important. We examined our sources of stress and decided to study how to manage our emotions and deal with challenges.

This chapter is about coping with stress. We will explore what determines how we feel and whether we can control or change our emotions at will.

Are there adaptive and non-adaptive responses to stress? Can I control my body's physiology? Can I control my thoughts?

Have you ever thought about what determines how we feel at any given moment?

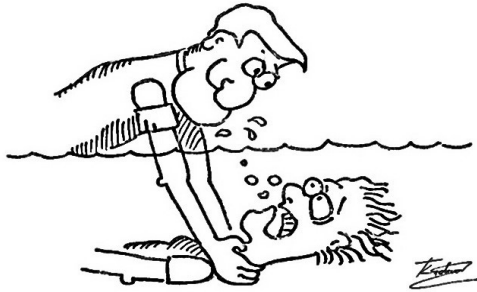
Coping responses

There is no single way to respond to a stressful situation. Two people may respond to the same event in completely different ways. Coping responses that are the result of conscious thought and planning may be referred to as stress management strategies and these can be categorized as a) problem-focused and b) emotion-focused.

How do *you* manage your stress? Please take a minute to consider what your favourite coping responses are when you are under stress. What do you usually do to deal with your negative emotions?

Done? Now take another minute to consider some healthier options.

Obviously, some coping responses are healthier and more effective than others.



Don, practicing a new coping response.

Contrast, for example,

- bursting out, lighting a cigarette, drinking, or binging to
- going for a walk, meditating, listening to music or talking it out.

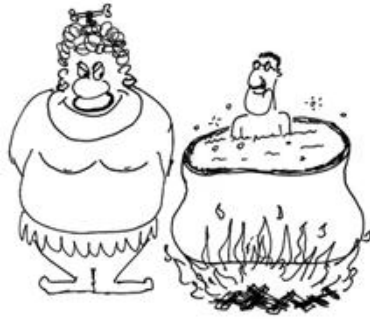
How will you react next time? Pick a healthy response and remember to use it.

Can we change the way we feel?

To answer this question, we first need to examine what determines how we feel at any given moment. Tony Robbins simplifies it. Two major factors affect our emotions:

- a. our physiology and
- b. our thoughts.

To demonstrate the importance of the first factor, consider how you feel when you have not rested or slept well; when your body lacks glycogen, nutrients, water, oxygen, or ... coffee. The reasonable next question to ask is, "Can we control our physiology?" We can, and we do all the time. Eating, drinking, deep breathing, moving – as if by miracle – alter our body's chemistry and affect the way we feel.



Good to see you pay attention to your diet!

Our thoughts, the second factor that determines how we feel, are influenced by external events and conditions as well as by our physiology. Optimally, changing a situation resolves the problem and reduces stress. Yet, we do not always have control over the external parameters. Rather than altering external conditions, cognitive psychology methods focus on changing one's emotions by changing the way s/he thinks and responds to events.

“When it rains, I let it.” 113-year-old man in response to a question about the secret of his longevity.

Exercise

How do you manage your stress? What are your favourite coping responses? What are some healthier options?

The “Ro” method

Ancient philosopher Epictetus went on to say, “Of things, some are in our power and others are not.”

Indeed, we cannot always control other people or external events. We can, however, control our thoughts, regulate our emotions, and adjust our behaviour – to a large extent.

Because we have complete control over our thoughts, we can alter the way we perceive external events.

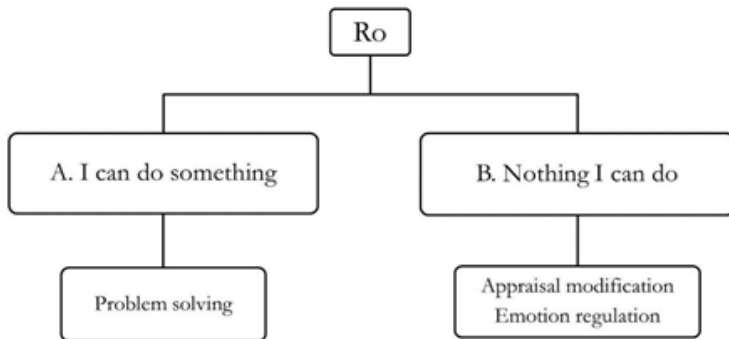
“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference,” wrote Reinhold Niebuhr.

Simplistic advice you may think. Note the two distinct paths: to accept conditions as they are or to accept the responsibility to change them.

Alas, most of us struggle with the third part of the above motto. Clouded by our emotions, we do not take a step back to examine whether the specific problem is amenable to change. Furthermore, we fail to consider

1. its priority compared to other demands,
2. possible actions, and importantly,
3. how much time and energy we are willing to invest to resolve the issue.

The “Ro” method is a rational problem-solving approach that simplifies the process and helps individuals organize their thoughts by examining the available options, as illustrated in the decision tree below.



In the next chapter we will take the information above and use practical examples from real life - your life - to test the theory. Get ready to apply the “Ro” method and solve one or more of your problems.

Exercise

Pick a problem, e.g., an issue you have been worrying about lately. Use the diagram above or the [“Ro” method infographic](#) to examine whether there is something you can do or whether you need to accept the situation.

3. Practical p'Ro'blem solving

He who cannot change the very fabric of his thought will never be able to change reality. – Anwar Sadat

IN THIS chapter, we will demonstrate how to resolve problems using the “Ro” method. For this purpose, we will look at the two (and only) available options when dealing with any challenge and examine one scenario for each.

Ready? Splendid!

Please take a minute to think of a problem that is bothering you and answer the following simple question:

Is there something you can do about it?

As mentioned, there are only two possible answers to this question, yes or no. If the answer is positive, review the first scenario below. If the answer is no, move on and read scenario B. For training purposes ... read both.

Scenario A: I can do something about the problem

When the conditions are *Amenable to change*, the issue is *Important enough*, and we are willing to devote *Energy and Time* (our two most valuable resources) to resolve it, then we better deal with it. Time to engage in problem solving, which is a healthy or adaptive coping strategy.

Basic problem-solving steps include:

1. Definition of problem.

2. Assessment of its importance and evaluation of its priority compared to other issues.
3. Listing of alternative plans. Here, we may need to seek the advice of experts, or read related material to learn more about the issue.
4. Ranking of solutions and selection of the best.
5. Implementation.
6. Outcome evaluation and feedback.

This six-step process produces one of two possible outcomes:

- a. problem solved or
- b. problem not solved.

In the first case all is well! Time to find something else to worry about.



I am worrying because I do not have something to worry.

Next, we will examine the second case, i.e., problem not solved. We will discuss ways to modify our appraisal of a situation that we cannot change and ways to manage the way we feel because of it.

Exercise

Think of a problem that you cannot resolve at this stage of your life. Can you change the way you see it? How do you feel about it now?

Scenario B: Nothing I can do right now

Assume you have exhausted all options and tried everything you could to change the situation. Or, that you have decided that the issue is not worth investing more Effort, Time, and Energy.

In both cases, you need to move on.

To put things in the right perspective, ask yourself:

“How important is the issue for the rest of my life?”

If it is very important, then it was worth the effort - and at least you did everything you could. Now consider the following:

“Am I willing to invest more effort and more time? Or should I focus on something else, equally as or more important - or at least something over which I have more control?”

The following metaphor can serve as a guide for future similar decisions.

Our most valuable resources

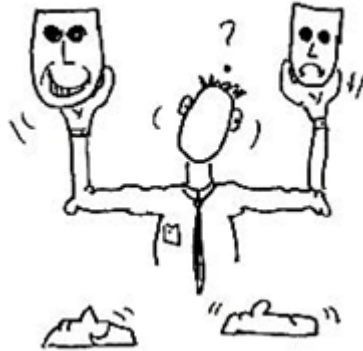
We all start our lives with a given amount of energy and time at our disposal, said Hans Selye. Each time we deal with a problem or a stressful situation, we “withdraw” a certain amount of Time and Energy from our account, to adapt to its demands. Individuals who easily resort to their “savings” may become bankrupt – physically and emotionally – much sooner than those who respond with caution and without exaggerations.

I know, you may not like it or you may feel bad about the outcome and the fact that the situation remains unchanged despite your efforts. Time to deal with your emotions, to change how you feel about the whole event. For this purpose, you can resort to cognitive psychology techniques.

According to Epictetus, “Men are disturbed not by the things that happen, but by their opinions of the things that happen.”

What we think is happening is not necessarily what is happening. There is no stress in any situation, unless ... we think there is. Things become as important as we allow them.

Although you may not be able to control the event, you can control your emotions as well as their intensity, frequency, and duration.



What should I wear today?

Circumstances and situations do color your life, but you have been given the mind to choose what the color shall be. -

R. Holden

Exercises

1. Think of a problem that you cannot resolve at this stage of your life. Can you change the way you see it? How do you feel about it now?
2. Have you been choosing your fights wisely? Because you may well win a few battles but end up losing the war. At the end of the day, spend 15 minutes to review which fights were worthwhile. Also review whether the number of resources you allocated to each was appropriate.

Pop quiz

What are the two factors that affect how we feel? List a few methods that you can use any given time to change your emotions.

In the next chapter you will be given a free “Ro” method template and use it to practice the theory above. You will solve a problem of your choice, preferably an important one or one you have been postponing for a long time.

I recommended you watch [90:10 The Single Most Important Thing You Can Do For Your Stress](#)

4. Applying the “Ro” method

The road to learning by precept is long, but by example short and effective. –Seneca

WELCOME BACK!

In this chapter, you will solve one of your problems. To make things easier, we will employ the P“Ro”blem-solving template below to deal with the specific issue that concerns you. It is a decision tree-like form that can guide you in organizing your thoughts and answering the key questions when dealing with any problem (e.g., examining whether the specific problem is worth your time and energy).

Awesome! Here we go. Pick a problem and fill in the form below.

“Ro” method template

1. Problem title:

.....

2. Description (define it, provide some details):

.....

3. Who is to blame (e.g., parents, teachers, the system, the stars):

.....

4. Does blaming help? (please select one answer only):

No ... No ...

5. Can I do something to change the situation?

a. Yes. Go to Option A below.

b. No. Skip A, and go to Option B.

Option A: I can do something about it.

1. What can I do? (Brainstorming, evaluation of ideas)

.....

2. What more can I learn about the issue?

.....

3. Who can help?

.....

4. Is it worth my time and energy?

No. Go to Option B below.

Yes. Keep thinking. E.g., how much time and energy am I willing to invest?

Option B: Nothing I can do about the problem (at this stage).

1. Accept the fact that we cannot always control others or external conditions.

2. Change the way you see the problem, your responses, or both. E.g., ask yourself “What’s good in all of this? What have I learned? What will I do next time?”

As you can see, solving problems is a logical process. The Ro method describes simple steps for dealing with any type of problem. It is guaranteed to solve your number one problem. Oh, and your number 2, 3, 4, ...

Exercises

1. To practice using the Ro method, pick two of the following scenarios: flight delay, failure to meet an important goal, financial problems, relationship issues, disease, death of a significant other. Explore your options and discuss healthy and adaptive responses with your partner, a friend or colleague.

2. When you feel you are ready, see if you can help a friend or family member deal with one of their problems today. Print the

form and go through it together with your friend. You can also use [the infographic of the “Ro” method](#).

Summary of Part 1

Stress can be useful or harmful. A certain degree of stress is necessary - it provides variety and alertness. Excessive stress is the problem. We need to learn how to regulate our level of stress.

All individuals face challenging situations and serious issues. Our perception, interpretation and responses make the difference and determine how successfully we cope.

Several techniques can help improve our coping skills and enhance our ability to effectively deal with excessive stress.

According to the Ro method, we have two options when presented with a problem:

- If there is something we can do about the stressor, we need to engage in problem solving, provided we care enough, and are willing to invest time and energy. If we do not wish to waste our valuable resources – time and energy – on resolving a problem that is not that important or that is not amenable to change, we are better off focusing on things that are under our control, such as what is going on inside us.

- If there is not much we can do about the stressor, then we need to change the way we view the problem and/or deal with our emotions.

Exercise

To practice using the Ro method, pick two of the following scenarios: flight delay, failure to meet an important goal, financial problems, relationship issues, diseases, death of significant other. Discuss healthy and adaptive responses with your partner, a friend, or a colleague. When you feel you are ready, see if you can help a friend or family member deal with one of their problems.

Midterm Contest

(Contest sounds better than ... 'quiz')

Here is a short learning test, with five multiple choice questions. Choose only ONE best answer. You will find the answers at the end of this section.

Question 1

In terms of negative emotions, we can reduce their ...

- a. Frequency
- b. Intensity
- c. Duration
- d. All the above

Question 2

Healthy coping responses to stressful events include ...

- e. Going for a walk
- f. Having a few drinks to relax
- g. Finding someone to blame
- h. All the above

Question 3

Stress management strategies can be categorized as ...

- a. Adaptive and maladaptive
- b. Personal and social
- c. Problem- and emotion-focused
- d. a and c

Question 4

The major factors that affect how we feel include ...

- a. The weather, the environment, and the others
- b. Our thoughts and our physiology
- c. Our emotions
- d. All the above

Question 5

According to Hans Selye, our most valuable resources are ...

- a. Relationships with others
- b. Material possessions and fiscal capacity
- c. Time and energy
- d. All the above

Answers

Q1: d

Although we cannot (and should not) get rid of all negative emotions, we can reduce a) the frequency, b) the intensity, and c) the duration of such emotions. With some training, people can change their thought patterns, build better coping skills, and change their responses, and as a result, the effects of stress.

Q2: a

Although getting a few drinks may be considered by some a 'healthy' response, it may lead to heavier drinking. Finding someone to blame may occasionally protect your self-esteem, but is not healthy in general. Getting out in nature (or in the city) is a healthier response.

Q3: d

Coping responses that are the result of conscious thought and planning may be referred to as stress management strategies. These can be categorized as problem- or task-focused and emotion-focused. They can also be considered adaptive or maladaptive, depending on how healthy they are.

Q4: b

How we feel at any given moment is determined by the chemicals that run in our body and in our brain, and our thoughts.

Q5: c

We all start our lives with a given amount of Energy and Time at our disposal, said Hans Selye. Each time we deal with a problem

or a stressful situation, we “withdraw” a certain amount of Time and Energy from our account. We should be cautious and not spend our “savings,” else we will become bankrupt too soon.

PART II: A DAY WITH DON STRESSOTE

A day is a miniature of life. When you have many beautiful moments, you have a beautiful day. When you have many beautiful days, you have a beautiful life. –Unknown



CONGRATULATIONS FOR completing the theoretical part of this short book, which provides practical information on managing stress and solving problems to *improve your daily life* or ... *the way you perceive it*. We already discussed the sources of stress and coping strategies, including the “Ro” method, which can help solve problems and deal with annoying people, situations, and our own irrational thoughts.

In the next chapters we will explore applications of the “Ro” method in selected scenarios (a small number of the many presented in the full book).

Don Stressote, a modern-day Don Quixote, and a “Ro” method graduate, will serve as the model, altruistically putting himself to the test during a day. We will observe how Don applies the theory you have been reading about, keeping in mind that there are only two options when dealing with a situation: to accept the responsibility to change it or to change the way you see it. Well, I

guess one can also be creative and a little eccentric occasionally when responding to a stressor.

Having mastered the content of the previous chapters, Don will face signs and wonders, maybe even ... blunders, but will come out smelling like a rose. He will successfully fight road traffic, confront annoying idiots (drivers, managers, colleagues, clients, friends, and relatives), and deal with perhaps the most difficult person of all: himself and his irrational thoughts!

Let us spend a day with Don.⁴ Move on Sancho Panza, watch and learn.

⁴ I challenge and invite you to share your ideas, experiences, and courage drills with others. E-mail me, and I promise I will get you published and make you more famous than the great men I sometimes cite: Aristotle, Epictetus, Shakespeare, and Rodafinos (I only include the latter because of his great ... size).

5. Morning work-out

Cause you can choose to say “Good morning God” or
“Good God, morning” –Lyrics from First in Flight

AS PROMISED, we will spend some time in the company of Don Stressote. The sun has risen, let us start the day.

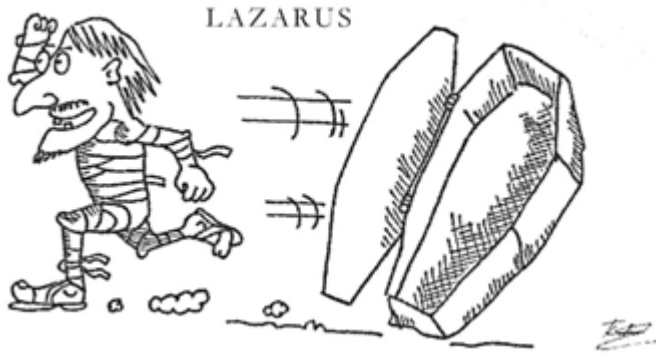
Many people complain about the conditions in their life, often with good cause. “How can I be happy in the morning when ...” and they describe what is happening to them.

While having breakfast, Don picks the morning newspaper, and applies an old technique, invented by Og Mandino. He flicks through the pages and scans the obituaries. If his name is not listed there, he figured, he has every reason to be happy! Some others were not so lucky today. He is confident that the deceased would give ... well, their lives if they could change places with him!

“No one is indispensable ... that is why the graveyards are full!” – Charles de Gaulle

My good friend Jim Papanikolaou once said, “Not only would I give everything I own; I would even work 10 years for free for them [the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit].” He should know; he suffered leukaemia a few years ago - and survived.

Don takes a deep breath and exclaims with enthusiasm: “It’s a wonderful day to be alive!”



It's a wonderful day to be alive!

If you disagree, try missing one ...

Perspective

Putting things in perspective is a very useful technique, which we described earlier, particularly if there is not much you can do to change the conditions.

Your situation may be difficult, but it could be worse. I hope you are not incurably ill, you are not serving life imprisonment, and that someone – just one person, your dog, your pet canary, or the jasmine plant on your balcony – still loves you.

Exercises

1. Who loves you? Make a short/long list and read it frequently. Make sure you pass some love to them too. If they look at you with suspicion, explain “it’s doctor’s orders.”
2. Examine what you can do to change the things you find unsatisfactory. Start with the first thing that annoys you when you wake up. Reminder: use the “Ro” method. E.g., if it is your alarm clock, change the tune to Vivaldi’s spring. If it is your thoughts, change them. If it is your partner ... well, you figure that out yourself.

On the way to work

Having enjoyed his breakfast, Don is on his way to work. He smirks as he thinks of a research study he read recently. Research participants who were asked to hold a pencil with their lips (frowning group) evaluated the same cartoons as less funny compared to a second (smiling) group, participants who held the pencil with their teeth.

What is the explanation? According to the “facial feedback” hypothesis, facial muscle movements send relevant messages to our brain neurons. It appears that our facial expressions provide our brain with information related to our mood. Frown or smile and the emotion will follow, concluded Don!

Application: act the part

To experience a particular emotion, act accordingly – as if you have already felt it. Do you want to feel enthusiastic, energized, and happy? Act enthusiastically and joyfully. Your turn to test the theory. Start small, by changing your posture. If you are sitting, sit up straight. If you are standing, take a deep breath, and push your shoulders back. If you are walking, stride with a dynamic and assured gait. Feeling better?

Wait, there is more!

Greetings and salutations

Exchanging conventional greetings can be monotonous and dull. In this peculiar area of human behaviour, one can be formal and ordinary or choose to be slightly eccentric, without people getting the wrong impression – much. Here are some creative salutation options:

- “Hello.” - “Yellow!”
- “Good morning.” - “Isn’t it just!”
- “Hi!” - “Very high!” etc.



Don has tested the drill. He can assure you that the other person will either crack a smile after Don's creative salutation or stare with a puzzled expression that makes Don crack a smile.

Your turn again. Check out the [Sentimentable](#) app on my web site. Follow the instructions, pick your random word, and use it to greet people for the rest of your day. Study the reactions of those you greet. Be prepared to explain the theory behind the drill - if you are interested in what they think about you.

We have just discussed a few ideas that may help you change the way you start your morning. Next, we will explore some more. It gets better. We will discuss creative responses to anger.

6. Angry drills

Do not make me laugh. I am trying to stay mad.

YOU HAVE learned a couple of simple tricks to change the way you (and others) feel during the morning. In this section, we will learn a few more, focusing on anger.

Do you often become upset? Very upset? What or who infuriates you? Let me guess: other people. Why? Under what circumstances?

To deal with anger, we first need to explore the foundations of anger. Anger is based on the following three sentences:

1. Why don't others behave the way they should?

This type of anger is directed towards others. "Should" can be interpreted as "the way they are supposed to" or "the way I would like them to."

2. Why don't I do what I should do or why don't I get the results I ought to?

This kind of anger is directed inwards, towards the self. "Should" refers to what my beliefs or others want me to ... want.

3. Why isn't the world the way it should be?

Anger in this case is generic, directed towards everyone who is "responsible," known or unknown. "The way it should be," in this case, is quite abstract. People can set their standards as high as they like. The only problem is that the higher our standards are, the easier it is to feel dissatisfaction or injustice.

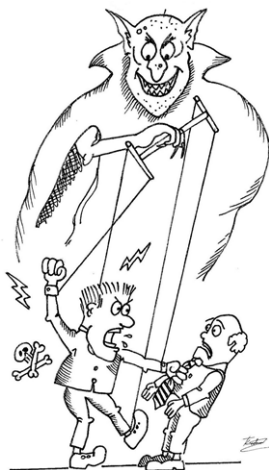
Here are a few simple thoughts that may help you manage your anger a bit better.

- Anger is a thought you carry along with you.

- It is not what you say or do what makes me feel bad, but rather what I do with what you say or do. (M. George)

- When someone throws the ball to you, you do not have to catch it (A. Robbins).

Mull over these ideas for a while. Examine their validity. Test the latter idea next time someone throws you a bitter comment. Do not catch it! Do not let others pull your strings. Remember, it is your thoughts that offend you. Remove judgment and you remove emotions.



Anger marionette theatre

I know, it is not that easy. It requires some training. Here is a useful technique.

Time out

In the beginning and until your responses become more automatic, do not hesitate to ask your “opponent” (i.e., the idiot who dares to disagree with you) for a time out. Suggest a cease-fire for a certain period and continue the argument exactly from where you left it. Don takes a deep breath and counts to 10 (thousand). Then consider whether there is a small chance you might be wrong or unable to see the other side of the argument.

Normally you are 100% right in everything, but, you know, maybe you could be the one who is wrong this time?

Next, we will continue along the same lines, and present a couple more tips on how to deal with annoying others and your own annoying thoughts.

S&M rubber drills

This exercise will help you become aware of how often negative thoughts evade your mind daily. It will also prompt you to dust away unwanted thoughts or change them to more positive ones. Here we go.

Don wears a rubber band on his wrist, like the ones Mr Albert the grocer uses to wrap the feta cheese you buy. Chic women can wear branded Lacoste, Armani, and Bridgestone rubber bands, to keep up with their style.

During the day, every time Don catches himself contemplating negative or pessimistic thoughts, complaining, getting irritated etc., he stretches the rubber band and lets it go suddenly so it returns to its initial position, thus whipping and punishing his wrist - in a sadomasochistic kind of way.

Watching his wrist turn red after a while, he realizes just how often many unsavoury thoughts unsettle his otherwise moral and calm life daily.

Exercise

To complete this first exercise, you need to put on your wrist the required accessory. Find a rubber band on your size and wear it now.

Record the number of occasions you “punish” yourself during the day, for a few days. Aim to reduce the incidents during the week. Engage in a competition with a friend of yours, and set a symbolic prize for the winner.

Alternatively, if you are not into S&M, use a stopwatch to count how much time you spend per day in an angry or negative emotional state. Then, examine your thoughts. Aim to change them and reduce this time by 20 or 30% per week.



Given the seriousness of Don's condition, the doctor recommended the S&M-2020, a more advanced and therapeutic self-punishment model compared to older rubber band prescriptions.

7. Work drills

Man who stand on hill with mouth open will wait long time for roast duck to drop in. –Confucius.

IN THE previous chapter, you learned a couple of methods that can help you deal with your own anger. I will present two more ideas, one of which can be applied at work to deter colleagues who tend to whine and grine.

The Stress-Visa

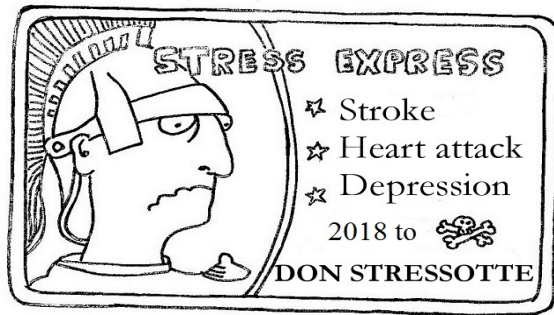
Allow me to introduce yet another visa card, the Stress-Visa (S-Visa) with instructions on both sides.

Side A of the S-Visa answers the question “What can happen to me when I am stressed out.” It lists some of the deleterious effects of stress on our psychological and physical health.

Side B includes several prompts, aiming to remind the owner to change his/her thinking and reduce stress swiftly and effectively:

- How is this behaviour helping me accomplish my goals?
- Can I do something right now, or should I accept the situation and focus my energy on something else?
- Relax. It is not worth it.
- Imagine the enemy in red long underwear.
- You will make it. You always manage to overcome everything ... eventually!
- In two years from today, this event will have absolutely no importance.

Or any other such soothing comment.



Don was kind enough to explain how to use it:

1. Every time you catch yourself mulling over the difficulties at work, or worrying in advance for a future event, pause for a second. Pull out the S-Visa and read aloud the list of the effects of stress on side A. Next, take a couple of deep breaths (they are free of charge: “Ahh” and “Ahh”), smile discreetly, and tell yourself: “Everything is fine. Cheer up you old codger. Just smile. All is cool.”

2. In emergency cases, turn the S-Visa over and review side B.

It works! Trust me, I'm a doctor.

Porky the miserable

The following drill aims at reducing grumbling and complaining at work.

Step 1: Buy a fat pink piggy bank.

Step 2: Appoint a Grouch Officer (G.O.)

Step 3: Every time a colleague says something in a negative tone, complains or grumbles (about the weather, the traffic, irate customers, etc.), the G.O. books the offender who receives a Grouch-Ticket (G.T.) and is required to deposit two Euros (Dollars, Pounds, Yuan, Yen – pick your currency) into Porky the Miserable, the fat pinkish piggy bank.

Step 4: At the end of the week, Don and I will join you and go shopping for carrots and cucumbers with the money collected

through the fines. We will have a feast and drink to the health of the grouches. If the office is a multi-grouch station, we can invite relatives, neighbours or the mayor and the city council to the festivities.



The more you complain the longer God lets you live [to suffer, that is ...!] – Anonymous

Exercise

Your turn now. Do not just read and smirk. Try Porky at work. I suggest you start small - test it for a week first. Then, if you want to go all the way, add this extra rule: in case of relapse or recurrence, the fine doubles. Note: You may need to organize POS/credit card payments as well, because a person fined a dozen times on a single day will have to pay €2,048. Fines for two dozen misconducts amount to €8,388,608.

Before we close the day, here is a bonus technique.

Isn't this interesting?

Next time an "Idiot" upsets you, tilt your head on one side, smile, and shake it from left to right, saying out loud, "Isn't this interesting?" Then, try to see the other person's perspective rather than getting tense and nervous.

Next, we will follow Don return home after a great day at work. He has a few more tricks under his sleeve.

8. On the way home

Time is a great teacher, but, unfortunately, it kills all its pupils. –Louis Hector Berlioz

WE PRESENTED two useful techniques, the Stress-Visa to help you manage excessive stress and Porky to help you manage professional complainers. Today we will discuss a couple of techniques for those who want to lose weight, as dissatisfaction with one's image can be a significant source of stress. Best to read the text below at the end of your work day.

Don, our hero, is about to pack up and leave work. Another day in his work life is ending.

What about yours? Was it a good day?

If not, you may want to visit the local patisserie on your way home. We need some pleasure, after all.

Well, I have terrific news for you: Cakes, sweets, and sugar do not build up fat!

Yes, you heard me right. These do not build up fat ...

YOU do!



Really? Cakes do not build up fat? What a relief!

“It’s not my fault I am fat. Flying cheesecakes land in my mouth, and I swallow them unwittingly” some utter as an excuse for their weight.

Not true. We choose everything we eat and we can normally control what we choose. Except, visual stimuli and the aroma of food can defuse the strongest will, particularly in the evening. Much like a muscle, our will power is depleted at the end of the day. Even Don cannot say “no” to freshly baked cakes when they beckon him provocatively. The following ideas may help you.

Tip 1. First diet your house. Warning! Most of the food you have in your house will eventually end up in your stomach. If you wish to lose weight, watch your purchases e.g., from the supermarket and ensure you also ask your friends and relatives for their support:

“Dear mum, if you really love me the way you say you do, please don’t fill up the house with sugar and other unhealthy foods.”

Tip 2. Change your route. If you have trouble saying “no” to treats, alter your normal route. Avoid passing near bakeries and fast-food restaurants. You will significantly reduce the likelihood of running into ambushes by ground-to-mouth-to-stomach flying cheesecake or hamburger missiles.

As Jim Rohn puts it “We must all suffer from one of two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. The difference is discipline weighs ounces while regret weighs tons.” He adds, “Something that tastes sweet in the mouth might turn bitter in the belly.”



Nothing tastes as good as being thin feels! – Elizabeth Berg

The advice about dieting and losing weight is endless. Remember, the basic rule is that to maintain your body fat, you need to ensure that intake equals expenditure. To reduce it, ensure that intake is less than expenditure.

Commitment devices

Here is your usual bonus technique - one of my favourites. Keeping up with new findings and new technologies, use a “commitment device,” a tool that holds you to your promises. Download one of the many “Virtual nagging wife” or a similar “Nagging husband” app. You can select a photo, the hair colour, voice, text, and your spouse’s avatar will pop up at key times (e.g., before lunch) to remind you “Watch what you eat honey, you did promise to lose weight, didn’t you. I love you.”

The truth is that, much like Aesop’s fable about the goose and the golden egg, if you wish to sustain your ability to produce, you need to make sure you nourish and take good care of the producer, that is, yourself.

If you want to accomplish your goals, and enjoy the process, best to engage in energy- rather than time-management. it is essential that you have the required energy and vitality during the day.

For this purpose, I suggest you check your path and examine your daily habits. Are you heading where you want to go or where you do not want to end up? Look for inconsistencies in your values and your everyday behaviour. E.g., you may value health but you smoke; you want to get a good degree at the university but you spend hours on social media, TV or playing computer games. Make sure you line up your ducks.

In the next chapter, we will spend some time discussing the need for continuous self-development, as the key to better relationships, health, finances, life satisfaction, less stress and many more.

9. Continuous self-development

Do not wish it were easier; wish you were better. Do not wish for less problems; wish for more skills. – Jim Rohn

WE DISCUSSED how our dissatisfaction with our self-image, using being overweight as an example, can have a spill over effect onto other areas of our life. As we are approaching the end of this brief book, we will continue along the same line to emphasize the need for self-improvement and offer a few suggestions on how to accomplish exactly that.

If you wish to get more from life (e.g., money, material goods, relationships, health), you must make yourself more valuable, argued Jim Rohn. Because, your rewards in real life depend on what you have to offer to the market place and on the value that you bring to the community.

Study to increase your expertise and skills around your profession, but also to build your knowledge of human behaviour, and the ability to understand your fellow human beings. Work on communication, relationships, dealing with conflicts, delegation, goal setting, and time management skills.

A simple strategy is to surround yourself with people who are smarter than or as smart as you are. As they say, if you want to fly with the eagles do not hang around with the turkeys.



If you want to fly with the eagles don't hang around with the turkeys.

Ultimately, hang out with people like our hero, Don, and with role models whose characteristics and behaviour you admire and wish to adopt.

The future belongs to the competent. Well-read and knowledgeable individuals have more and diverse professional choices and are socially more appealing.

People can acquire everything they desire (always within their genetic limitations and within reason) provided they are willing to work for it. If you really want something, and you are prepared to pay the price for the ticket that will lead you there, then go for it!

Develop your own plan

To get more out of life, it is time to figure out your own self-improvement strategy.

As Dan Silvestre suggests, start by creating a two-column list:

1. On the left, consider the areas that are important to you and write down the skills you need to develop to reach your goal.
2. On the right, list the tasks and behaviours you should be doing daily that will help you develop the skills you listed on the left.

Once you manage to write down a few items, rank these in order of importance. Which 2-3 of these activities will yield the highest return and lead to major improvements in your life?

Here are a couple of examples:

- Life satisfaction: stress management skills. Read more on the subject, watch related videos, MOOCs, TED talks etc. Half an hour a day, before breakfast and after dinner... with a glass of water.
- Relationships: communication skills. Attend a related course, learn about conflict resolution, see a counsellor. Monday and Wednesday afternoons.

The list of things you can do to improve yourself is endless. Yet, there is no need to do everything at once. One step, one skill at a time.

Also keep in mind that things will not always go as you anticipated or planned. Setbacks, problems, and diseases are part of life. Ah, but the good thing is that tough times and bad experiences can often teach us valuable lessons! So, when you lose make sure you do not lose the lesson.

Keep on track and ensure you make the right choices, choices that will eventually get you where you wish to go. Complete the little errands, pick up the phone and call a friend, read to the kids, give a loving hug to your partner (and whatever may follow).

A slightly different week, in the company of Don Stressote, has reached its end. What have you learned? What changes are you prepared or determined to make? What will you not do again? What will you do differently?

Attention though. As Ziglar colourfully pointed out, "If you keep on doing what you've been doing, you're gonna keep on getting what you've been getting." If you change nothing, nothing will change. Well ... not entirely true. Things will change even if you change nothing – probably for the worse, because, if nothing else, none of us is getting any younger! (By the way, the older you get, the better you realize you were ...).

Next, we will recap everything we learned throughout this short book. I will provide you with a few reminders and a bonus tip, as usual.

10. The beginning (epilogue)

Two babies were born on the same day at the same hospital. They lay there and looked at each other. Their families came and took them away. Eighty years later, by a bizarre coincidence, they lay in the same hospital, on their deathbeds, next to each other. One of them looked at the other and said, "So, what did you think?" –Steven Wright

YOU HAVE reached the end of this short version of the book *Idiots are Invincible* - or, you have reached the beginning of a new period of your life!

So? What did you think? I hope you enjoyed the content and the experience. In fact, I hope you enjoyed all or most of your experiences so far. Why? Because the present soon becomes past and is gone forever. For that reason, make sure that you make the most of your precious time on this planet. Put things in perspective and do not blow them out of proportion. View your work (and your life) as it really is or ... better than it is. Appreciate the positives and learn from the negatives.

Let us summarize the lessons on stress management and problem solving, and review some of the tips by Don Stressote.

Stress. Stress can be useful or harmful. A certain degree of stress is necessary - it provides alertness, variety and serves as a comparison standard. *Excessive* stress is the problem, as it can be detrimental and deleterious to our physical and psychological health. We need to learn how to regulate our level of stress - and that is completely possible. We can enhance our coping skills and use several techniques to effectively deal with excessive stress.

Coping with stress. All individuals face challenging situations and serious issues. Our perception, interpretation and responses make the difference and determine how successfully we cope. Unwise and maladaptive responses to stressors may feed negative emotions, such as worry and apprehension, are predecessors to unhealthy behaviours (e.g., smoking, poor nutrition, insufficient rest), and increase the chances for further psychological and physical problems. Yet, we can control our thoughts, our emotions, and our responses. As Seneca put it, "Pain is inevitable ... suffering is optional."

The "Ro" method. I believe by now you have figured out the basic choices in dealing with all types of problems: a) accept the situation as it is or b) accept the responsibility to change it. According to the "Ro" method, when presented with a problem:

- If there is something we can do about the stressor, we need to engage in problem solving, provided we care enough, and are willing to invest time and energy. If we do not wish to waste valuable resources on resolving a problem that is not that important or that is not amenable to change, we better focus on things that are under our control, such as our thoughts.

- If there is not much we can do about the stressor, then we need to change the way we view the problem and/or deal with our emotions.

Applying the "Ro" method. Examine whether a problem is amenable to change, its priority compared to others, and your willingness to invest resources required to deal with it. A key concept of the method is that we need to pick our fights wisely and spend our time and energy carefully and in moderation - they are both limited!

Tips and drills by Don Stressote. Most people waste their energy trying to change things and situations that may not be under their control. With wisdom, tolerance, and humour, Don presented ideas on how to start the day, change the way we greet others, deal with angry or miserable people, avoid unhealthy food, and how to keep working on our self-improvement.

Bonus tip

I guarantee you will face problems and setbacks. To expect otherwise would be insane. Accept problems as an unavoidable element of life. Every now and then remind yourself of a truth that will comfort you:

THIS TOO SHALL PASS!

Final Quiz

Take the quiz to find out what you know about dealing with stress and problems. You will find the correct answers at the end of the text.

Question 1

When dealing with a problem, we should consider

- a. Its importance and priority
- b. Our options and possible actions
- c. How much time and energy we are willing to invest in it
- d. All the above

Question 2

Putting things in perspective is useful when

- a. There is not much you can do about a problem
- b. You must deal with a negative event
- c. You need to act and engage in problem solving
- d. None of the above

Question 3

The “facial feedback” hypothesis argues that

- a. Emotions follow your thoughts
- b. Thoughts follow emotions
- c. Your facial expressions affect how you feel
- d. Feedback by others is important for how you feel

Question 4

Anger is based on expecting

- a. Others to behave the way they should
- b. Ourselves to perform well
- c. The world to be a fair and just place.
- d. All the above

Question 5

Which of these will yield the highest return and lead to major improvements in your life?

- a. Stress management
- b. The “Ro” method
- c. Communication
- d. It depends on the individual

Answers to the Quiz

Q1: D

Q2: A

Q3: C

Q4: D

Q5: D

Well done!

You have successfully completed the abridged version of my book and learned several basic principles and simple techniques to manage the stress created by annoying others or your own disturbing interpretations. Now go out, share these skills with others and demonstrate how to use them.

Wishing you success and happiness!

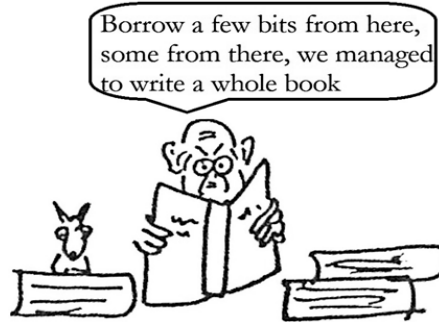
Oh, and keep away from the Idiots ...

Their President,

Dr Ro

PS: If you like the material, join the [Idiots Club](#) and check out the full version of [Idiots are Invincible](#).

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Special thanks

To the dear readers who literally embraced the Greek version and shared their experiences with me online and by phone; some introduce themselves in person on the street, in shops, at the cinema, and joyfully describe the changes they accomplished in their lives.

To the most loyal “fans,” who read extracts every morning, applying generous splashes of *Eau de Ro* to get them through the day. I am flattered and will probably become slightly arrogant, but do not worry, carry on. I can take it!

To Klio Panourgias who assisted in the translation and Liza Warwick for editing the final draft. To the friends and colleagues who have proofread drafts and suggested corrections.⁵

To Kostas Tsakonas, Lambros Lazouras, and Anna Konkouri who illustrated the text with their sketches.

Thanks to you, my dear reader, for taking the time to read this abridged version of my book. If you enjoyed it, please share it with a friend.

⁵ I have made every effort to acknowledge the original authors of short tales, quotes, and texts and to ensure their content is as accurate as possible. Wherever this was feasible, I cited their names, following ethics and copyright law requirements. However, on certain occasions, these are either attributed to more than one source, or are orphan (i.e., of unknown origin; you know, the ones we tend to call “Chinese proverb”), and I have not been able to identify the copyright owner. If you know the source, kindly email me the information, so that I can make the necessary corrections in future editions.

Dr Ro



I help others change their reality or manage their perceptions of reality, while they are having fun in the process! [and, no ... I am not a drug dealer!]

Angelos Rodafinos began his studies in the School of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering, at the National Technical University of Athens because ... he was a top student in high school. His love for sports made him change study path and, despite significant others' expectations, he re-enrolled in Physical Education and Sport Sciences at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He then earned a scholarship for Postgraduate studies (MSc) in Sports Psychology and Teaching, in Ithaca College, New York, and another to pursue a Doctoral degree at the Department of Psychology, University of Wollongong, New South Wales (Australia). An academic for nearly 20 years, Dr Ro taught general, applied, social, and work psychology at several International Universities. He served as Head of the Department of Psychology at City College, International Faculty of the University of Sheffield for nearly a decade, and as the Program Director of Social Sciences at Online Educational Services, Melbourne.

He has published numerous articles in academic journals and popular magazines and appeared in several TV and radio shows. His first book *Prince to Frog ... and Vice Versa! Applied Psychological Techniques to Improve Yourself-or Others* has become a popular reading guide for people of all ages and

backgrounds. His second book *Idiots Are Invincible* deals with stress and problem-solving.

Training and consulting

A professional speaker and consultant for organizations and individuals, Dr Rodafinos presents numerous seminars and workshops on topics related to change, stress and time management, motivation, communication, persuasion and negotiation, management, team building and cohesion, public relations, success and happiness, exercise, nutrition, etc.

Kind words from workshop participants

The worst part of the seminar was ... the break. –Nikos Anthopoulos

I really believe business around the world need to hear a voice of calm, positive, and realistic opportunities during tough economic times. I was most impressed with your positive and enthusiastic presentation style. –Bill Lewis, President Extension Management Inc., USA

Congratulations on the presentation you delivered in Sheraton Sofia on Wednesday! It was exact, having in mind the audience, with humour, positive and easy-to-get message. –Draga Paskova, Human Resources Manager at Interamerican, Bulgaria

Today I thanked God for giving me the courage to get up and come to your seminar. I want to thank you as well for reminding us of the simple but basic truths in life. –Chris Vovori

A wonderful presentation. We wish it were more than six hours! I was not tired at all. It was interesting with lots of variety. – Panos Rogaris, Managing Director, Hellenic Telecommunication Insurance Co.

I regret that you are not in Sydney, because if you were here, maybe I could attend some of your lectures. They were one of the

most interesting during the whole ExecMBA program of City College, Sheffield. –Marietta Kostadinova, MBA.

Contact details

To organize a book show, a lecture, or a workshop for your company, club, association, high school, etc., view Dr Ro's schedule or to download free eBooks and presentations visit the official site <http://www.rodafinos.weebly.com>

Connect with him online on

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/rodafinos1>

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Twitter: @rodafinos

SKYPE: rodafinos

email: arodafinos@gmail.com

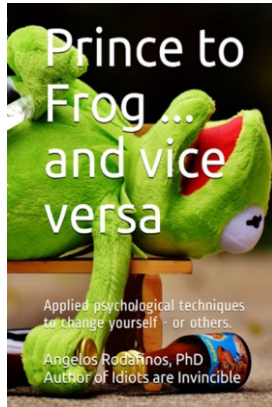
Clients

Dr Rodafinos' list of clients includes companies, educational institutions, fitness, and health centres etc.



Other books by Dr Ro

Prince to Frog ... and vice versa. Applied psychological techniques to change yourself - or others.



We are all born beautiful babies, adorned by parents and friends, with potential to become real princes. However, at some stage, around 30 - for some later, for others even earlier-most of us, instead of “would-be princes,” we become “frogs,” because of the bad habits (poor nutrition, maladaptive thinking, bad companies, etc.) that we adopt along the way... and so on. How can one revert to being a prince once again? One solution is to wait for the kiss of the princess. The other is to read this book.

Most people would like to change one or more things in their lives. In fact, when examining their lives, very few individuals have difficulty finding an area they would like to improve.

This book will serve as a manual for individuals who want to change something in their lives or in the lives of people around them.

Based on the theories of learning and cognitive-behavioural psychology, the author describes goal setting and behaviour modification techniques that have been applied effectively in educational settings, fitness centres, business organizations, hospitals, mental health institutions, and prisons. If you are

not happy with yourself or with the conditions in your life, do not lose hope, because you can change - if you follow certain steps. Yet, if you do not change your direction, you are going to end up where you are heading (saying ... made in China).

www.rodafinos.weebly.com ISBN-13: 979-8650206484